

she carries a gene which makes her susceptible to poliomyelitis. The homeless, alcoholics, drug addicts and prostitutes which make up the 'skid row' populations of North America have, it appears, been augmented by genebombs, those whose perceived genetic shortcomings make them unemployable. They are described as thin, eating their meals from 'dumpsters' and obtaining occasional 'gruntwork', whatever this may mean. Much of what follows is written in the same style. It contains a great deal of information, at least some of it in language which should be comprehensible to the general reader. But overall it presents a rather disjointed and fragmented account of the story, much of which seems to have been gleaned from talking to some of the major players in the field, nearly all of them American. On the other hand it undoubtedly catches some of the political, commercial and scientific tension which has characterised the early years of this extraordinary project.

There is widespread concern about the ethical issues which might arise from the new genetics. Hence they must be debated openly between the scientific world and the public. It is important, therefore, that good popular science writing makes these complex issues available to a wide readership. Those who can stomach the style of this book may find parts of it helpful in defining these difficult issues. Where it seems to fail, however, is in its lack of a cool and dispassionate account of the enormous medical advances which could follow from the human genome project, weighed against these ethical concerns. And it does not make it clear that most of these concerns are not fundamentally new but have simply been highlighted by recombinant DNA technology. In an attempt to catch the reader's attention and describe the more lurid aspects of this endeavour, the book lacks balance. There are better accounts of the genome project for the non-specialist who wishes to try to understand its complexities.

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## The Human Body and the Law

David Meyers, 367 pages, Edinburgh,

1991, Edinburgh University Press,  
£45.00

In 1970 Meyers's book *The Human Body and the Law* was published. Some twenty-one years later Mr Meyers has brought out a second edition of his book. In the intervening period there has been an explosion in publication in the medico-legal field. The question arises: is there room for yet another book? *The Human Body and the Law* covers many of the topics already dealt with in those books presently available—consent to treatment, children and incompetent patients, transsexualism, abortion, reproductive technology, the severely damaged neonate, termination of life-saving treatment, allocation of resources and experimentation. What then is the value of this book to the student and to the academic? The short answer is that it may be of assistance to both as long as neither has unrealistic aspirations regarding the scope of the book. Those looking for detailed ethical, historical and sociological debate will not find it here. As the author comments, the book is largely a summary of the legal developments in the area since his last edition.

A major strength of the book is the comparative approach that it adopts. The author examines English, Scottish and United States law. Academics are often cautious in introducing students to source materials from other jurisdictions. Unless carefully handled, comparative analysis of medico-legal issues can confuse rather than enlighten the reader. Mr Meyers ensures there is no chance of confusion by outlining the approach taken in each jurisdiction within a separate section inside each chapter. The book also includes chapters in which the issues of transsexualism and the conflicting rights of mother and fetus are examined in greater depth than is attempted in existing textbooks.

A hazard which faces authors who write in this area is that the subject is constantly changing, with new developments both in law and in medical practice. If publication of a book occurs at the wrong time then parts of the book may be swiftly out of date. Mr Meyers has been unfortunate in this respect. The book was published prior to the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990 and thus the chapters on reproductive technology and abortion require amendment. Similarly the book also preceded cases such as *Re J* concerning the involvement of the courts with the treatment of the severely damaged

neonate.

*The Human Body and the Law* is a scholarly work which provides a stimulating coverage of the subject. Its niche in the market may, however, be rather in the category of a reference book than as a standard text—an impression reinforced by the price of £45.00!

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## The Patient-Physician Relation: The Patient as Partner, Part 2

Robert M Veatch, 306 pages,  
Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1991,  
Indiana University Press, £27.50 hc.

This is an excellent sequel to the author's *The Patient as Partner*, which was in turn based on his more theoretical *A Theory of Medical Ethics*. In *The Patient as Partner* he explored the importance of the role of the patient as an active partner in medical research. In the present volume he extends his argument to the setting of clinical care.

The book is well-structured in five parts covering foundational issues, the individual professional-patient relationship, the social counterpart of this relationship, specific problem areas, and future directions. The coverage is impressive, from basic moral and political theory, through topics as diverse as malpractice, experimental drugs, placebos, cost containment, the elderly, organ transplantation, guardianship and ethics committees, to a broad picture of clinical practice in a post-modern age. Much of the material has been published before. But it has all been extensively revised and several of the chapters are completely new. Helpful summaries of the author's earlier work are included. The overall result is a clear and coherent synthesis of a mature theory of the doctor-patient relationship.

The central theme of the book is that patients and their surrogates should be recognised fully as active partners in the process of clinical decision-making. At one level this is no more than a re-statement of the importance of the principle of autonomy in medical ethics. But the author derives his model of the doctor-patient relationship from a